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THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BASIS OF THE ADMINIS-
TRATION OF RURAL EDUCATION
EXAMPLE: KLUCKITAT COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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There are four general principles involved in the successful administration of rural education which may be stated as follows: (1) There must be sufficient financial support to give the kind of education needed in rural life; (2) Financial support should be given with as little waste as possible and should be equalized among the several school districts on the basis of ability to pay as far as practicable; (3) An effective system of administration and supervision must be established and maintained; (4) The schools should be centers of local community interest.

For the purposes of this discussion let us consider a sparsely settled region in the southern part of Washington just east of the Cascade gap of the Columbia River, comprised within the county of Klickitat.

The people generally are vigorous and ordinarily intelligent, and some of them are exceptionally progressive farmers. The soil of the entire county is very rich and productive. The middle and western portions of the county have sufficient rainfall to raise a variety of farm products. Irrigation is necessary for the eastern part before any crop except wheat can be produced. Approximately 75 per cent of the farms are each one hundred acres or more, and there are one hundred farms each of five hundred acres or more. However, since 1910 a movement toward small farms ranging from ten to fifty acres has begun. As yet only about 50 per cent of the possible farm lands are held for farm purposes, and only about 40 per cent of these lands are improved. Transportation facilities in the county are comparatively meager and undeveloped. The S.P. & S. Railroad runs along the entire southern border of the

county on the north bank of the Columbia River. A branch of this road leaves Lyle and extends into the interior of the county as far as Goldendale, the county seat. However, in the absence of steam or electric transportation a large number of good wagon roads have been constructed in all parts of the county which run on converging lines to several trade centers. To sum up, there are rather remarkable agricultural possibilities in this county and they are being rapidly developed. But when we turn to the possibilities of educational development we are forced to the conclusion, after making a recent survey, that the schools are not going ahead and that there is really little thought given to the matter.

When it can be fully demonstrated to the wide-awake agriculturalists and townsmen of this region that a rational system of rural education is part and parcel of the larger social economic development, then the rural-school problem will bid fair to be solved. The solution of this problem can never be initiated, much less consummated, by the teachers employed to teach the present district schools. These teachers are employed for a year, or usually at most for two years, by each local board, and then they travel on to find greener pastures, only to repeat again and again the same deadening routine of instruction, which fulfils the minimum requirements of the state law. This is said to be a "democratic education."

The problem is how to get the social and economic consciousness that already exists in this county to include the school as an essential institution in the social and economic development of the community. At this moment I have before me a small bulletin of a land company which is operating in that county. Among other statements which are calculated to induce people to invest we find the following: "To buttress every investment by creating a social neighborhood and a community of interest that will insure property values, remove the social disabilities of country life, and make business co-operation easy and agreeable." Such a company as this could profitably enlist the co-operation of the other land companies and that of the individual farmers of the county, for nearly every farmer desires to sell a part of his large holdings, and could initiate an effective system of rural-school administration on the one

basis alone of settling up the county. In the more settled portions of the county where productivity and farm management complicate the problem, the certain effect of well-supported, well-equipped, well-manned, and well-supervised schools could be demonstrated. But where are the missionaries of the public schools that will go out and preach such "sordid doctrine" that a much better rural school than the present must be secured to help the inhabitants to be successful in raising pigs? And then who will follow up the conversion with the higher values to be secured through an educational system based upon economic needs? The present school system is simply tolerated by most of these hard-headed farmers. A little of it they admit is good, perhaps, but more is useless. Many of these men do not recognize the present school education as having anything to do with their problems, and are they not right? Furthermore, they do not understand that any kind of activity that is called "education" could possibly have any value for them. In this respect, of course, they need enlightenment. A short time ago the writer visited a county fair. He chanced to talk with the father of the boy who had been awarded the blue ribbon for raising the best exhibit of vegetables. He said, "Just as soon as John [referring to the prize-winner] is fifteen [the legal age when compulsory education ceases], I'll take him out of school, because he will be a first-class farmer." Later on he said that John's brother would probably continue his school work longer, because he showed no signs of becoming a good farmer.

Not only has the school developed in isolation from the society which it is designed to serve, but administrators of education have attempted to carry on their work in managing and improving the system by themselves. In the conduct and improvement of the other branches of the civil administration there are frequent appeals made to the people, and campaigns of education on the questions of administration involved are carried on among them. But when there is a question of administration of education up for consideration it is kept, in nearly every case, within the ranks of the profession. With some notable exceptions, the history of school administration in the United States since the days of Horace Mann presents a complex system of legislative "patchwork" sur-

passing understanding. The one discernible principle threading through it all is the desire to "keep the schools out of politics." The schools have been kept out of big politics only to be kept in petty politics. Our elective school officials consistently refuse to consider the administrative problem involved in the relationship of the lay authority to the expert authority. For example, they contend that the people can elect as good a county superintendent as a county board of education elected by the people can appoint. Whenever a proposition to raise the standard of certification of teachers is made, they become active with the legislative committee to keep the standards down, because, perchance, the proposed standards are too high for them. We need, as Massachusetts needed in 1830, strong laymen to step in and "bowl over" the schoolmasters in the interests of rural education. Only now we need such men in every state and in every county. For the great majority of these so-called elective school experts the present system of district organization is good enough, in their own thinking.

The present system of district organization in vogue in our state takes little, if any, account of necessary valuations to provide for instruction now needed, much less for instruction which should be provided in the near future. There is little consideration of the principle of equalizing educational opportunities and school support. The educational and economic waste involved in forming district lines is rarely considered under our present irrational system of district organization. The whole scheme is built upon the basis of the "length and strength of the smallest child's legs," and it is perpetuated by the desire to hold the office of director and by the teachers and county superintendents who find the present system good enough for them.

And yet what this county and many, many others need cannot be provided under the present system. As this county becomes more thickly populated small farms will become the rule instead of the exception. There will be less wheat grown, and a variety of farm products will take its place, as fruit, forage plants, hogs, cattle, poultry, etc. As diversified farming is introduced the problems of farm management will be increased. The economic status of the farmer lies at the basis of his improvement in all other social

matters. Vocational and prevocational instruction adapted to the needs of the rural communities will not be fads but necessities. Not only must new courses be given in the schools, but the present courses must be reorganized and applied effectively to rural problems—not rural problems in general, but rural problems in Klickitat County: home economics for the farm home, a many-sided course in agriculture for this diversified farming region, commercial work applied to the market for farm products, manual training applied to the construction of farmhouses, barns, silos, etc., and the uses, repair, and care of farm machinery. Arithmetic will deal with problems of farm management.

A new kind of training in arithmetic will be applied to the big agricultural and home problems, farm management, and farm-home management. Farm accounts will be one of the important parts of the agricultural instruction, and household management will be one of the important parts of home economics.

The actual data of the farming business will be gathered and interpreted: the value of the land of a given farm will be considered, the cost involved in preparing the land for the various crops, the cost of seeding, of cultivating, and irrigating. Next in order would be a consideration of the capital invested in tools and machinery, and the depreciation in the value of the same owing to wear and tear; also the cost of harvesting the crops and the marketing of them; the cost of the haul to the market or shipping-point, freight rates, etc., would be important items in the big problem. Following this the gross and net incomes from the sale of products would receive attention; after which would follow a consideration of the most profitable crops and the cost of keeping land up to the maximum productivity. The pupils then could profitably be employed in solving the problems of the percentage of net income on the capital invested. They could compute the wages of the hired men and of the men owning the farm and the cost of the living of the family on the farm. After all the facts were in they could determine whether or not the owner of the farm had realized a fair wage for his labor, a fair interest on the capital invested, and whether or not there was any profit over and above wages and interest.¹

It is one thing to be able to raise good crops, but it is often another thing to raise profitable crops. If cows are to be kept on the farm, are they profitable? The boy should keep accounts with the cows so that the star boarders of the herd may be eliminated. These problems and many more would be included in

¹ Lull, "The Expanding Elementary School," *The American Schoolmaster*, March, 1914.

arithmetic under the heading of prevocational instruction in the rural schools. Arithmetic will be used in opening up the possibilities of the farm in the pupils' own community. Used in this way arithmetic will become a strong instrument in vocational guidance, which is the main element, after all, in prevocational instruction. In like manner the girls should apply their arithmetic to their problems of home management and should at the same time share in the work of the home. There is great promise in the system of school credits for farm and home work done in connection with prevocational instruction. Similar modifications of the course of study as it now exists may be worked out for English, geography, history, civics, and hygiene instruction. English composition should concern itself less with the "Man in the Moon," "A Summer's Outing," "The Adventures of a Brownie," and "Beyond the Alps Lies Italy," and increasingly more with topics pertaining to the civic and economic problems of the community. The composition should assist the pupils in giving accurate and elegant statement of the farm and home-life problems being studied in other courses. There is little need in these days of quickened social interests to go far afield for composition content by stringing together a series of collections from the encyclopedia.

Geography should constantly make the home weather conditions, the home soil, the home agriculture, home industries, home transportation of commodities, and other home institutions the points of departure for remote geography, and the points to which remote geography is referred. "The Inhabitants of the Isles of the Sea" may be an interesting topic, but scarcely pertinent when the boys and girls are strangers to the vital geography of their community, state, and nation.

History must be reorganized to emphasize those constructive movements of civilization. Mendel, in establishing the laws of plant and animal breeding and growth, did more to add to the real wealth and happiness of mankind than hundreds of men who are given important places in history textbooks and history instruction, and yet he is unknown by the teachers and pupils of the rural schools. There were and there are heroes of agriculture, industry, labor, and social improvement. These must find their rightful

place in our instruction. The great constructive forces of civilization must find a larger place in education if we are ever to be able to avoid the great social cataclysms like that of the present. The need for better instruction in civics and hygiene is too obvious for discussion in this paper. This all means that better teachers must be trained and employed, better administration and supervision must be secured; in short, the vital education of the masses must become the social passion. With these matters in mind let us return to our theme.

Without further consideration of the problem of bringing the course of study and instruction up to a respectable degree of efficiency, suppose the school districts of Klickitat County should undertake to introduce prevocational instruction in all schools and vocational instruction in the larger villages, what would be the problems presented? Out of a total number of eighty-five districts only nine had as high as thirty or more pupils in average daily attendance for the school year ending June 30, 1913. At the present time there are possibly fifteen districts out of the eighty-five that have two or more teachers per district. An average daily attendance of thirty pupils for nine months would give a total attendance of 5,400 days. The state and county apportionments amount approximately to 15 cents per day's attendance of each elementary-school pupil.¹ At 15 cents a day the state and county apportionments for such a school would amount to \$810.00. With an assessed valuation of \$100,000.00 and with a special tax of 10 mills (which is as high a rate as any district ought to have), the income from the local district tax would be \$1,000.00. Therefore the annual income for the school district would be approximately \$1,810.00. Then if we should include the proposed attendance apportionment from the state of one and one-half days for each day's attendance for each, say, of ten prevocational pupils in average attendance, the total income of this school would be increased from \$1,810.00 to approximately \$1,877.50.

What do these figures mean? First, the average number of pupils in daily attendance; secondly, the number of two-teacher

¹ This amount includes one-third of the county apportionment made on the basis of the number of teachers employed by the district.

schools; and, thirdly, the annual income of the districts. In the first place, there are seventy-six districts having less than thirty pupils in average daily attendance. These districts should not even establish prevocational instruction, because two teachers for less than thirty pupils in average daily attendance would be too expensive. Yet at least two teachers are absolutely necessary and three teachers would be advisable in any elementary school attempting to give prevocational instruction. One teacher already has more work than she can well do in carrying on the regular work through the six or eight grades of the elementary school. To accomplish anything worth while in this line would require at least two teachers for eight grades; a woman, to do the regular work of the primary grades and the home economics work of the grammar-grade girls; a man, to carry on the regular work of the grammar grades and the agricultural and industrial work of both the grammar-grade boys and girls. On this basis of organization, however, only fifteen schools of Klickitat County could at present qualify for prevocational instruction. Again, scarcely twenty-one schools out of the eighty-five have sufficient valuations to support prevocational instruction. We have seen that a district of \$100,000.00 assessed valuation, having an average daily attendance of thirty pupils for nine months, would have an annual income of approximately \$1,877.50. To secure teachers in this county who could really do the work the woman would have to be paid \$80.00 per month for nine months, or an annual salary of \$720.00, and the man, \$100.00 per month, or an annual salary of \$900.00; the two together, \$1,620.00. There would be left only \$257.50 for other maintenance expenses, and this amount would scarcely be sufficient. Finally, probably not more than twelve of these twenty-one schools have sufficient attendance to warrant the employment of two or more teachers, and therefore, only twelve schools of the eighty-five would be justified in introducing prevocational instruction.

Under the present organization only two towns of the county, White Salmon and Goldendale, could introduce vocational instruction. Probably a third town, Bickleton, could qualify for vocational instruction in a short time under the present organization.

Under a better organization practically all children of the proper ages in the county could be given vocational as well as prevocational instruction. There is enough wealth in the county to support all necessary phases of elementary and secondary education, providing the entire county could be organized in such a way as to eliminate unnecessary waste. For example, district No. 86 with a total average attendance of 1,260 days and with a local tax of 10 mills on an assessed valuation of \$139,704.00, would have an annual income of approximately \$1,586.00. For its seven children in average daily attendance this would be \$226.00 per child, an enormous sum to spend upon each child, yet under the present organization the kind of education needed by these children could not be provided even at this cost. There are a large number of such districts in this county and in this state. District No. 1, on this basis, would expend for each child annually \$758.00. Of course, these districts do not expend such large amounts, for if they should they would waste much more than they do now. On the other hand, a 10-mill tax under a rational district organization would be more than enough to furnish rural-educational facilities unsurpassed by any similar county in the United States. Under present conditions the districts pay high costs per child and receive little in educational returns. District No. 1 actually expended per child for the year ending June, 1913, \$153.72, and this on a 1-mill tax levy. In that same year district No. 66 levied a 10-mill tax and raised \$53.17 per child. In the Russell Sage Foundation report on *A Comparative Study of Public-School Systems in the Forty-Eight States*, the state of Washington was given the highest rank for public-school efficiency; but notice the values given to the different educational features. Washington expends more than any other state per child and is ranked second in expenditure in proportion to its wealth, while it ranks only twelfth in the number of days the schools were open, and only twentieth in the percentage of school attendance. Considering the number of states (in the South) that have no compulsory attendance laws, the rank of twentieth puts Washington well down in the list. The one score which gave Washington the first place was the amount expended per child, and this is really a count against us when we consider it in relation to the economic waste and educational inefficiency of our rural education.

The Russell Sage Foundation report was undoubtedly well meant, but it lacks many essentials of being an accurate report of the relative educational efficiencies of the several states. The report has helped to retard educational progress in Washington by establishing the boast that "our state holds first rank in education"—a statement frequently heard from the lips of unthinking persons employed in educational capacities and from school boards, business men, farmers, and legislators, who answer all proposed educational innovations in terms of "economy," which for them simply means doing nothing.

Supposing these inequalities and wastes in the educational expenditures of the county could be entirely eliminated, what should we find? Under the present system of state and county apportionments a 5-mill local tax income on all the assessable property of all districts of the county added to the income from the state and county apportionments would provide approximately \$50.00 per child attending school. Under ideal conditions this amount per child would provide for all needed phases of education in the entire county. This ideal, of course, for many reasons is impossible. The practical question remains, however, how far can present school conditions in this country be improved in the direction of this ideal? There exists in this county the wealth requisite to give all children of school age excellent educational opportunities adapted to the needs of rural life, without being too great a burden on anyone. What can be done? What is practicable?

The accompanying map shows in a general way what could be done in this county if the educational administration were really organized for business. To secure prevocational and vocational instruction it will be necessary to divide the county into larger district units to provide sufficient valuations and a sufficiently large number of children to conduct the work efficiently and economically. The question is, shall such a division be made rationally by a competent authority representing the entire county, or shall it go on forever without getting anywhere under the present law for consolidation of districts, placing the initiative and responsibility with the local districts themselves? To enhance the tendency to consolidate the state has offered a bonus of 2,000 days' attendance

for every district that comes into a consolidation minus one, i.e., a three-district consolidation would receive an annual bonus of 4,000 days' attendance. In spite of this liberal bonus there is no tendency at present in the state as a whole toward consolidation, and there are few consolidations effected or contemplated in this county. But this principle of consolidation is impracticable, for when the consolidations are made, the old inequalities among districts still remain. Stranded districts are left which cannot get into consolidations, because, perchance, they may have many children and low valuations. Then, too, in this state the law does not require any supervision of schools not already given to the small districts by the county superintendent. Nor does it require any changes in the grouping of children in the schools or transportation to a centrally located high school. Districts consolidating usually go in simply for the bonus. Out of five consolidations recently effected in Lewis County of this state only two have provided for supervision and none of them have provided transportation. One consolidation has twenty-two districts in it. What then is the solution?

First, what principle of district organization could be applied? The places indicated on the map as centers around which circles are drawn are all natural trade centers. There are other country crossroads centers consisting of a general merchandise store, a blacksmith shop, etc., but they are not properly classed as trade centers, not being shipping-points, and lacking means of money exchange. Some of these smaller places may some time develop into trade centers, of course. On the other hand, some of the centers indicated on the map are at present only potential, but as the land is settled they must become trade centers because of their locations. The farmers bring their produce into these towns, buy their supplies, do their banking, and become well acquainted with the business men, shippers' association men, etc. Here they attend grange, shippers' association meetings, lodge meetings, and avail themselves of church facilities when they desire an intelligent delivery of the gospel message. Here they "swap" yarns and visit the movies and the county fair. These are the real social centers as well as trade centers. This economic and social situa-

tion is just as essential for the success of the school as it is for the other local institutions and enterprises. The same solidarity of economic and social interests necessary to the industrial and civic development of a community is necessary for its educational development.

There is a mutual interdependence between these trade centers and the land which is naturally tributary to them. The business of these towns is dependent upon the success of the farmers living within their tributary trade areas. Why should not the boundaries of the social and trade unit be also approximately the boundaries for the educational unit? Then as the boundaries of the former change, the boundaries of the latter should also change. The present irrationally formed, isolated districts generally do not coincide with any real social unit at all, and no social-center movement, however well initiated and directed, can ever make them anything but superficial social units.

The problem of transporting pupils to the central schools of the proposed districts would be easy of solution. The roads leading to the trade centers must all be in good condition to carry the heavy loads to market, and now they are coming to be constructed for heavy automobile trucks. Neighborhood schools in the same district could be maintained for the little children, and the high-school pupils could be transported to the high school in the trade center. At first, no doubt, it would be advisable, also, to transport the pupils of the seventh and eighth grades into the trade center in order to give them the advantages of prevocational instruction. The distance that pupils could be transported profitably would depend, of course, upon the condition of the roads and whether there were a sufficient number of pupils living at the longer distances to make up a load. With good roads and automobile service upper-grade and high-school pupils could be carried ten miles, or possibly even fifteen. Some transportation would become necessary for the smaller neighborhood schools, also, but the distances would be comparatively short. There would always have to be in each neighborhood school from fifteen to twenty children to make the employment of at least one teacher economical. Very few of the present district-school buildings could be used, for they

are neither suitable for the work which should be done nor located in the right places. Fewer and better buildings should be located on the main roads leading to the trade center.

The assessed valuations of the proposed districts indicated by the map vary at present from \$259,555.00 to \$1,763,811.00, and the total attendance days of the proposed districts would also vary correspondingly. The variations both in assessed valuation and in total attendance days would be very much less than under the present district organization. At any rate all districts as proposed would have sufficient valuations to support elementary instruction including prevocational instruction and some high-school instruction, and at least five of the proposed districts could also include vocational instruction.

But the big question still presses for answer, How can such an organization of education in this county or any other county of the kind be accomplished? We have seen why the present consolidation scheme fails. There must be a competent authority representing the people of the county to make a study of the county as a whole and then make the division of the districts on the basis of the principles above discussed. Happily the problem of rural-school administration is passing beyond this stage of theory into that of practical experiment from which most desirable results in a few places have already been secured. Notable gains have been made in this direction in Utah. A few counties in that state are organized on a plan known as the "county-unit plan." A few other states have the county-unit plan, although the administrative machinery is more or less cumbrous. After making a study of rural education in all the states of the Union, Mr. A. C. Monahan, the specialist of the United States Bureau of Education in the administration of rural education, has recently issued a bulletin on *The County-Unit Organization for the Administration of Rural Schools*. As a result of his studies the United States Bureau of Education suggests the essentials of the county-unit organization. The plan seems admirably adapted for applying the principles of rural-school administration, mentioned at the beginning of this paper, and is therefore given below. This plan would meet the requirements of the sparsely settled counties, which present the most difficult problems for school administration.

THE COUNTY-UNIT¹

1. The county, the unit of taxation and administration of schools (except that, in administration, independent city districts employing a superintendent would not be included).

2. A county school tax levied on taxable property in the county, covered into the county treasury, and divided between the independent city districts and the rest of the county on a basis of the school population.

3. The county school funds, including those raised by taxation, and those received from the state, expended in such a way as would as nearly as possible insure equal educational opportunities in all parts of the county, regardless of the amount raised in any particular part. (Any subdistrict should be permitted to raise, by taxation or otherwise, additional funds to supplement the county funds, provided the subdistrict desired a better school plant, additional equipment, or a more efficient teaching force than could be provided from the county funds.)

4. A county board of education, in which is vested the administration of the public schools of the county (except those in independent city districts) composed of from five to nine persons, elected or appointed from the county at large; the board to be non-partisan; the term of office to be at least five years, and the terms arranged so that not more than one-fifth would expire in one year.

5. A county superintendent of schools, a professional educator, selected by the county board of education, from within or without the county or state, for a long term (at least two years), who shall serve as the secretary and executive officer of the county board and as such be the recognized head of the public schools in the county (except those independent city districts).

6. District trustees in each subdistrict of the county, one or more persons, elected by the voters of the district or selected by the county board, to be custodians of the school property and to serve in an advisory capacity to the county board. The expenditure of local funds raised by the subdistrict would rest with the trustees subject to the approval of the county board of education.

7. The powers and duties of the county board of education:

a) To select a county superintendent, who would be its secretary and executive officer in the performance of all of its other functions, and to appoint assistants as required.

b) To have general control and management of the schools of the county.

c) To submit estimates to the regular county taxing authority of the amount of money needed to support the schools.

d) To regulate the boundaries of the school subdistricts of the county making from time to time such alterations as in its judgment would serve the best interests of the county system.

e) To locate and erect school buildings.

f) To supply the necessary equipment.

¹ *Bulletin, No. 44, 1914, United States Bureau of Education, p. 8.*

g) To fix the course of study and select textbooks (using the state course and state-adopted textbooks where action has been taken).

h) To enforce the compulsory-education law.

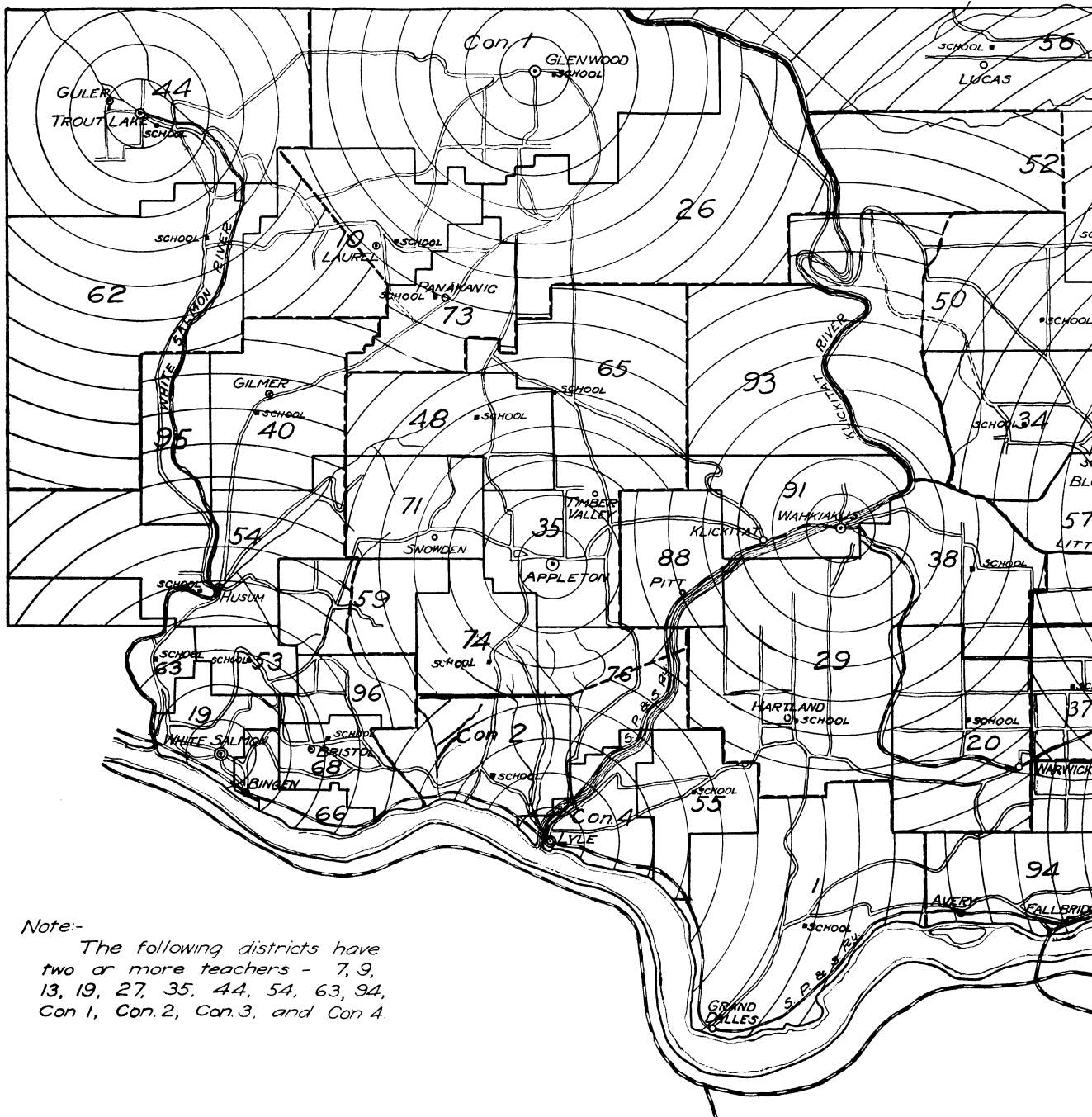
i) To employ teachers, fix their salaries and the salaries of other employees.

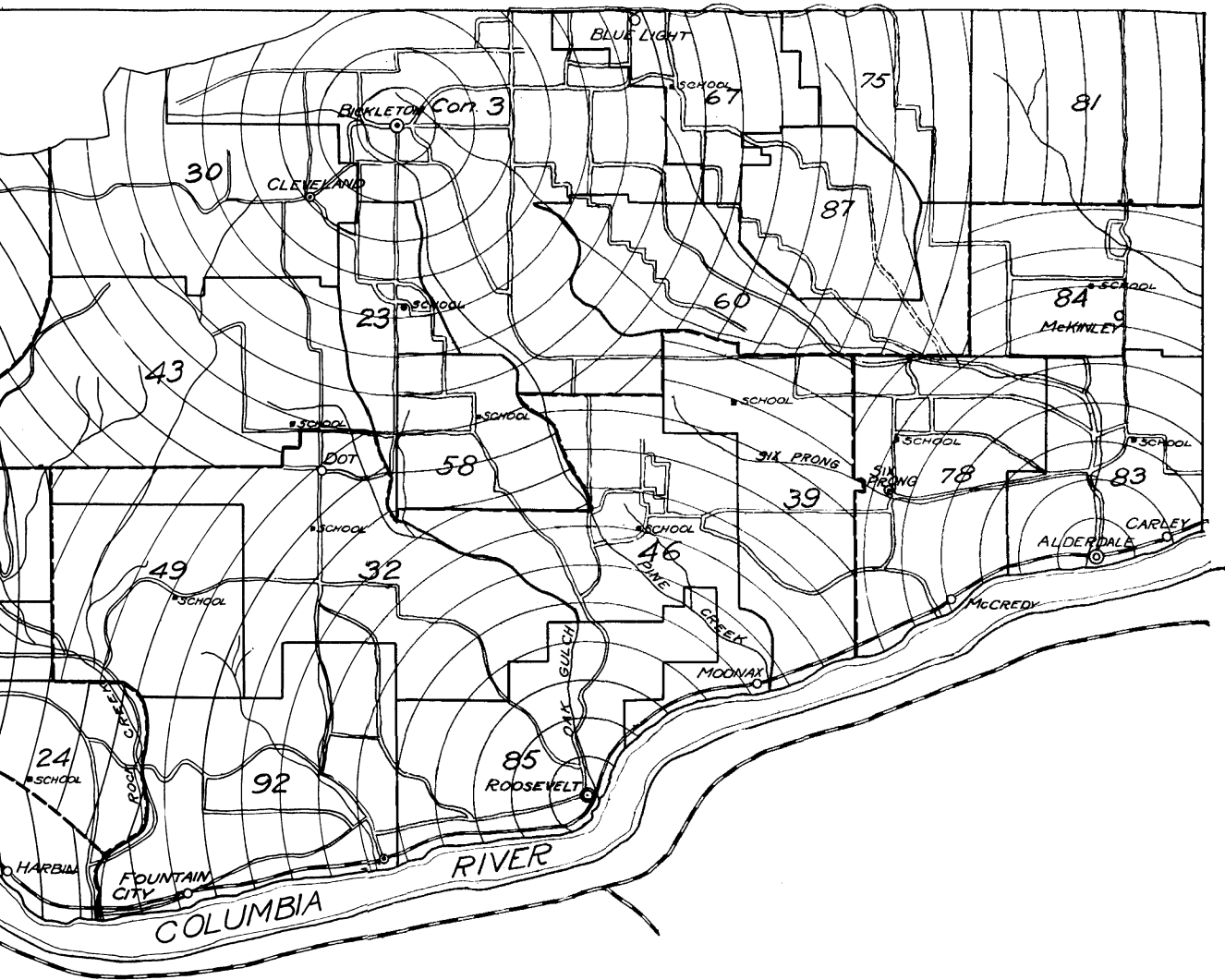
In anticipation of the argument which may be made that the concentration of the administrative authority in the hands of one central county board of education will reduce the opportunity for the exercise of local initiative and hence will destroy community interest in the schools, it may be said, in addition to reasons already given, that the present system certainly does not stimulate community interest because the school unit is not a part of the existing social unit. Furthermore, the possession of authority, which, by its very nature, belongs to a larger unit than the single community, retards school interest. The county-unit system as above outlined leaves to the community precisely those educational duties which it is best fitted to perform and eliminates those which a century's experience has shown to be beyond its ability. The community is given a standard school and then it may, on its own initiative, individualize and improve the buildings, grounds, and the work of the school as far as community enthusiasm will warrant. The community under the county-unit system is released from administrative detail to work upon the more vital problems of educational service. On the other hand, we are not without testimony that the county-unit system, as a matter of fact, increases the school spirit of the community. President Galbreath of the East Tennessee Normal School says:

With the county as a unit the interest of the patrons in the progress and real worth of the schools has been intensified and all have been given a clearer understanding of the problems that must be worked out through the public schools. There is a more intense interest on the part of the patrons in the activities and needs of the schools than could have been experienced under the old law where each school was a unit in administration, support, and interest.²

The writer wishes to state that much of the material used in this paper was used by him as a part of the report of the State Vocational Commission of which he was chairman. The commission's report is as yet unpublished.

² *Bulletin No. 44*, 1914, United States Bureau of Education, p. 56.





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Boundaries

MAP OF
Klickitat County
WASHINGTON
SHOWING PRESENT SCHOOL DISTRICTS
AND PROPOSED CONSOLIDATIONS